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SUBJECT: ZAMBIA AND ACOTA: REVIVING THE PARTNERSHIP

¶1. (SBU) ACOTA Program Manager Scott Fisher's visit to Lusaka February 2 offered the opportunity to reopen discussions with the Government of Zambia (GRZ) about continuing with the second and third phases of the African Contingency Operations and Training Assistance (ACOTA) program. Since the first Zambian Defense Force (ZDF) battalion was trained in 2007, the cooperation had been on hold due to various bureaucratic reasons.

¶2. (SBU) Fisher reminded the Zambian Army, Air Force and National Service deputy directors for operations and training that the program had much to offer the ZDF in the way of capacity building and equipment for peacekeeping operations. He also explained the possibilities in specialized capabilities. Fisher urged them to schedule the training to coincide with pre-deployment preparations for units committed to the UN mission in southern Sudan. In addition, he believed that after three iterations of training, Zambian personnel would be able to perpetuate the training of ZDF forces with little or no USG assistance. The staff officers agreed that the program had much to offer Zambia but offered no explanation as to why it had not been pursued more vigorously. They also seemed equally interested in the specialized training Fisher described. They noted that, as the GRZ had already agreed to participate in the program at a policy level, they saw no obstacles to continuing the program. However, due to budgetary and planning requirements they would need to clear precise dates and types of training with their chains of command. In the meantime, they asked Fisher to put them on the schedule tentatively for training in June or July and promised to respond to the embassy with proposed dates and more specifics on the type of training desired.

¶3. (SBU) Fisher also met with Deputy Foreign Minister Fashion Phiri, who agreed that Zambia had much to gain from the ACOTA program. He foresaw no difficulties in getting GRZ on board but offered his services if any facilitation were needed.

¶4. (U) Embassy Lusaka stands ready to facilitate the second phase of ZDF training in mid-2009.

BOOTH